

Learning Places Summer 2017

# Library / Archive REPORT

## Interference Archive and Brooklyn Public Library

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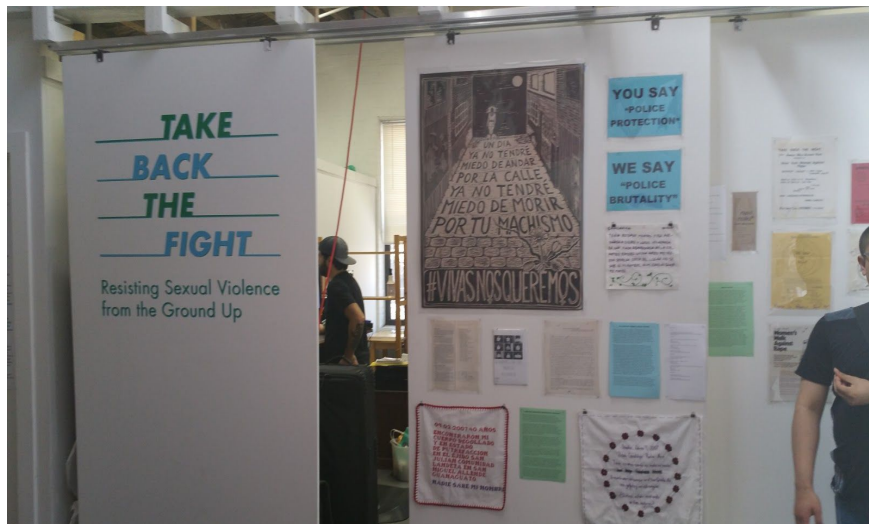
## INTRODUCTION

For the second half of the class we started focusing more on research, research strategies and research sources. Our first of the two trips was to Interference archive located on 8<sup>th</sup> st between 3<sup>rd</sup> av and 2<sup>nd</sup> av. An archive is a collection of documents regarding people, places, groups, legal documents, media or even financial documents but unlike a library for example the information gathered at an archive usually comes from first hand data and primary sources. There are also different types of archives ranging from university archives, community archives, government archives, corporate archives and religious archives. Interference archive is a community archive and a nonprofit all volunteer archive that is purely sustained by its donors. In my opinion is a very political archive that does a good job trying to represent groups that are not usually politically represented as well as document the connection between culture and social movements. Because of the different types of documents that can be found at an archive they are organized by type. Some of the type of documents that can be found at interference archive are posters, books, newspapers, flyers and even pieces of clothing. These documents are considered ephemera because they are helping to preserve a single moment in time that otherwise might be forgotten. This visit also helped me see that anyone can help preserve history that represents us as a community. A lot of the documents found at Interference archive are documents that people find around their own homes.

For our second site visit we visited the Brooklyn public library central branch located in Brooklyn Grand army plaza. On this visit, we had Jane the librarian take us through the process of doing research in the reserve room. We looked at examples of letterheads, which I found interesting to see how far they dated back. I also found interesting the fact that we could learn so much about the community, finances and the types of business at a specific moment in time using these letterheads. We also looked at atlases and photographs of the Gowanus neighborhood that showed us how the community has changed overtime. It was also interesting to see the type of information we extracted from one map. Some of the maps gave us a sense of what materials were being used in different neighborhoods and other maps gave us a sense overall scale of Brooklyn accurately drawing street and lot sizes. Besides experiencing the reserve room, we closed our tour library by visiting the newspaper morgue at the

basement of the library. This was interesting to see because it shows how relevant and important history is even if it's in a newspaper clip that is 150 years old.

## SITE IMAGE 1 (Interference Archive)



### Exhibit Space (interference Archive)

These two images were taken in the exhibition space at the Interference archive. This exhibit is on sexual violence. This exhibit is a prime example of the power of an archive as it is bringing attention to a very controversial and political topic, but it is also a topic that needs to be discussed. I also enjoy how all the materials vary in type size and even language. None of the material in the exhibit space is exclusive to one group of people. It's a collection of many different types of groups that are all fighting the same battle, perhaps in a different language but with the same end goal in mind.



## SITE IMAGE 2 (Interference Archive)



This is an image of the Interference archive and here we start to see some of the challenges of managing an archive. This one is an open stack archive meaning the books are simply on bookshelves open to the public. To the left of the image we see how all the other things are stored based on size and type. We see the newspaper storage as well as boxes with articles and series all categorized by theme and sizes. Hanging from a line are pieces of fabric embroidered with messages and this to me shows again how different the types of documents found in an archive. The space itself was a bit cramped but that to me is part of what I like. It is part of the experience having to move boxes out of the way to find what you are looking for and more often than not I found something that caught my eye trying to clear the way for something else. Overall this archive is organized efficiently enough so that I was able to find what I was looking for.

### SITE IMAGE 3 (Brooklyn Library)



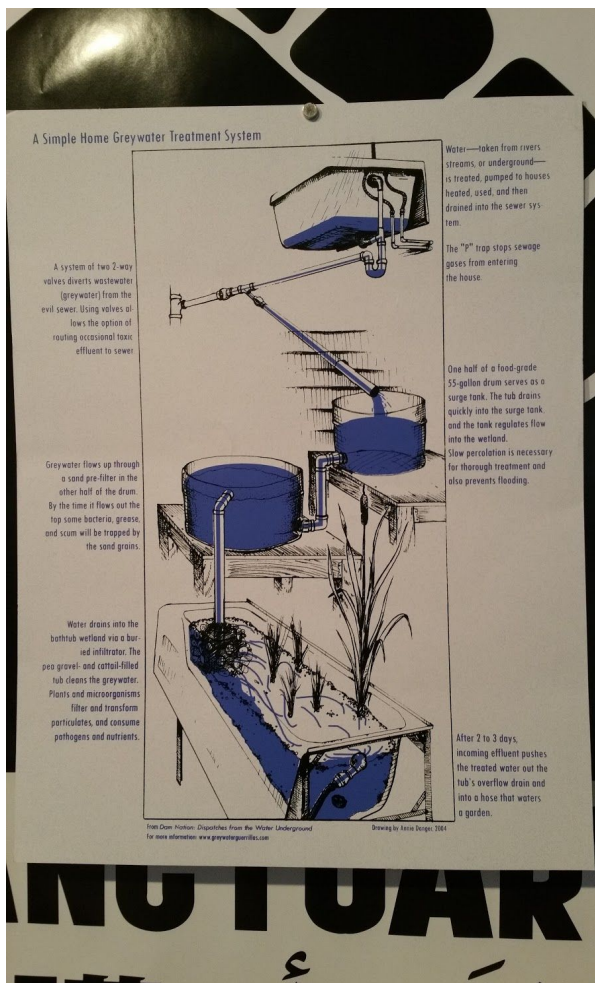
This photo is taken at the Brooklyn Public Library just outside the Howard Golden Reserve Room. The reserve room is a room that houses a collection of books, newspapers, Atlas and maps. Some of the documents found in the reserve room are not to be removed from the reserve room. The library is extra cautious taking care of these documents as some of them date back more than 100 years. All the materials found in this room are to be handled with care. The space is brightly light which made it easier to examine a set of maps, atlas and photographs of the Gowanus neighborhood. I also noticed how quiet the space was compared to the atrium space outside.

## SITE IMAGE 4 (Brooklyn Library)



These photos were taken at the basement of the library, where the library morgue is found. Because it is the basement and not usually accessed by the public there is a very different feel when doing research at the morgue. There is no natural light but the space is still brightly light. It is called a morgue because it houses hundreds of newspaper clippings. According to the librarian all clippings and newspapers found in the morgue have been digitized and made available online.

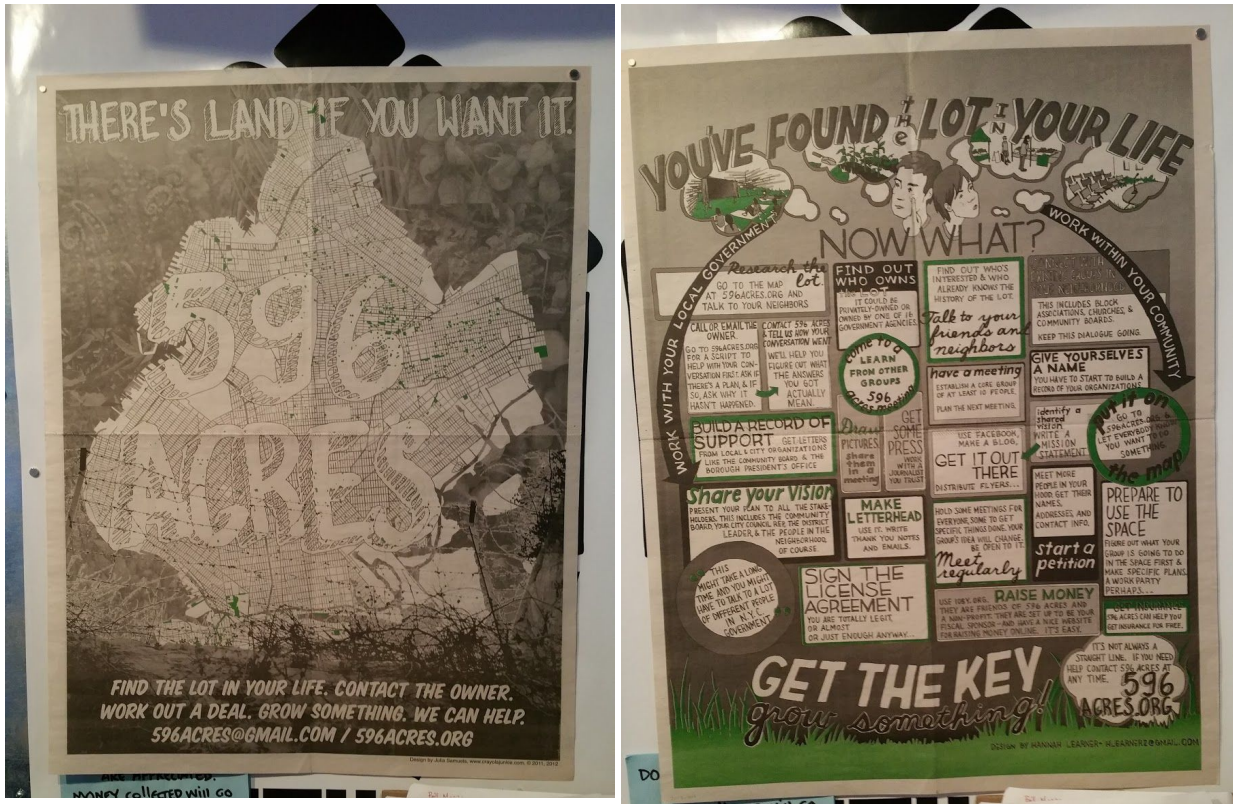
## ARCHIVAL SOURCE #1 (Interference Archive)



### Interference Archive Box D-A2, Folder Environment

This is a photo of a poster I found at the interference archive. The poster caught my eye because I could tell it was some sort of water treatment system. This poster relates to one of the major themes that we have discussed in class as it begins to tell us how we can filter pollutants out of storm water or in this case greywater. The Gowanus canal is a superfund site because it is extremely polluted and one of the head pollutants is sewage water. This poster shows a grey water treatment system that diverts water from the sewers into a surge tank where the flow where it can be regulated. The poster also shows a system that uses tubs filled with sand, gravel and plants to filter out pollutants in the grey water. This is a very similar technique used in the Gowanus neighborhood but instead they are using bioswales which also use sand gravel and plants to collect and clean water.

## ARCHIVAL SOURCE #2 (Interference Archive)



### Interference Archive Box D-A2, Folder: Gentrification

This is double sided poster that shows a map with all the vacant public land in Brooklyn according to the NYC department of city planning. According to (596acres.org) there is a total of 596 acres in Brooklyn alone. The poster is very animated, it highlights the vacant lots in green and across the map the number 596 is printed. The head of the poster reads “there’s land if you want it” and on the bottom, there are simple instructions on how to get started if a lot catches your eye. The back side of the poster is just as interesting showing what to do if you want to purchase or find out about a vacant lot in more detail. It gives directions on how to purchase, who to call and even how to voice your opinion in the most effective way. The poster also encourages those who see it to spread the information. This is an important point because part of the reason why some communities lose the fight to developers and politicians is because they are uninformed. In a city where every lot seems to be under development we might not see the 596 available to the public.



.ARCHIVAL SOURCE #1 (Brooklyn Library archive)



**Map of the City of Brooklyn(1841) Reserve Room, Brooklyn Public Library, Brooklyn, NY**

This is a map of the City of Brooklyn in 1841 before it joined NYC. The map is very general not showing too much detail. We can't see streets but we can see neighborhoods. Although not very detailed the map is still very informative as it shows what type of industries, farmland and even towns existed at the time. For example we can see that the Gowanus canal had yet to become so polluted because we there is a picture of oysters on the bay. From this map, we can see what areas where the first ones to see development in the 1800's. This is also a great source of research because we can compare it to a map of Brooklyn today and see what neighborhoods have thrived and what industries where here before losing a lot of its industrial business in the area.

## .ARCHIVAL SOURCE #2 (Brooklyn Library archive)



### Map of the City of Brooklyn(1834) Reserve Room, Brooklyn Public Library, Brooklyn, NY

This is a map of the City of Brooklyn in 1834. This is in part due to the introduction of containers. The map also says that there was approximately 200,000 people living in the City of Brooklyn compared to the 2.622 million living in Brooklyn today. This difference in population is one of the reasons why the sewage system in the Gowanus neighborhood dumps so much of its waste into the Gowanus.

### GENERAL NOTES:

- Archives are political and controversial.

- Archives often preserve the history of social movements and groups.
- According to the interference archive their operational expenses of the interference archive are paid by individuals who give regular monthly donations, through the support of one-time financial gifts of any amount, and through donations from classes that visit their space.
- An Archive can sometimes be a much better source for primary sources when doing research as a lot of its content can come directly from the public.
- Archives conserve a lot of ephemera like posters, pamphlets, flyers, and more.
- Brooklyn central library first opened to the public on February 1, 1941
- The library was designated a New York City Landmark in 1997 and joined the National Register of Historic Places in 2002.
- Central Library receives more than 1.3 million visits each year, and items from its collections circulate nearly 2 million times annually.
- In the basement of the library there is a collection of newspapers some even from the Brooklyn eagle, this place is called the morgue.

## KEYWORDS/VOCABULARY & DEFINITIONS

**Ephemera-** Things that exist or are used or enjoyed for only a short time.

**Eminent domain-** The right of a government or its agent to expropriate private property for public use, with payment of compensation.

**Primary source-** A primary source provides direct or firsthand evidence about an event, object, person, or work of art. Primary sources include historical and legal documents, eyewitness accounts, results of experiments, statistical data, pieces of creative writing, audio and video recordings, speeches, and art objects.

**Secondary source-** Secondary sources describe, discuss, interpret, comment upon, analyze, evaluate,

summarize, and process primary sources. Secondary source materials can be articles in newspapers or popular magazines, book or movie reviews, or articles found in scholarly journals that discuss or evaluate someone else's original research.

**Serials-** Journals, magazines, and newspapers are serial publications that are published on an ongoing basis.

**Propaganda-** Information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view.

**Slums-** A squalid and overcrowded urban street or district inhabited by very poor people.

**Archive-** A collection of historical documents or records providing information about a place, institution, or group of people.

**Call slip-** Form filled when requesting an artifact from an archive or library.

**Finding aid-** a document containing detailed information about a specific collection of papers or records within an archive.

**Microfilm-** Film containing microphotographs of a newspaper, catalogue, or other document.

**Letterhead-** a printed heading on stationery stating a person's or organization's name and address.

## QUESTIONS for Further RESEARCH

1. How will small archives in neighborhoods like Gowanus fair with the next wave of “urban Renewal”?
2. How has Urban renewal transformed the function of the waterfront?

3. How do developers define slums as opposed to the people living there?

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